

New Jersey Department of Education
Office of Early Childhood Education

EARLY LAUNCH TO LEARNING INITIATIVE

2005-2006 Questions and Answers

Q. What do you mean by certified Pre-K teacher?

A. A certified Pre-K teacher is one who hold a P-3, N-K, or Elementary certification with Pre-K experience in a regular education or inclusion setting.

Q. Are some teachers grandfathered?

A. Yes, but they have to meet certain qualifications in order to be grandfathered – they must have preschool teaching experience in preschool for at least two years after receiving certification. Or they can obtain a Certificate of Eligibility and complete the required Pre-K–3 endorsement college program.

Q. When do we know what the districts will get paid for, projected versus actual enrollment?

A. Payments are adjusted based on actual enrollment as reported in mid-year reports and a final adjustment will be made to the last payments based on the end-of-year reports. Budgets should be as close to actual as possible. It is advisable to enter the number of children the district actually believes it can enroll, rather than simply entering the total estimated low-income population.

Q. Should we include out-of-district pupils in our enrollment totals?

A. No.

Q. Which enrollment figure should be used for the 2005-2006 plan?

A. Use the October 14, 2004 enrollment count (collected for the Application for State School Aid, or ASSA) for this.

Q. If you have higher enrollment than you estimate, will you get more money?

A. No. No one will get more than the amount stated in their award. However, payments will be adjusted, if you enroll fewer students than you project. ELLI funding follows only the actual number of low-income students served.

Q. Knowing that we will not get funding for more than the number of children we project, would it be better to overestimate or underestimate?

A. We recommend using an estimate that is as accurate as possible, taking into account both the percentage of low-income students in the district and the space available to serve those students. This will help districts avoid projecting to serve an unrealistically high number of ELLI students and generating an amount of funding that will not materialize if actual enrollment numbers are lower than what was projected. Districts that have clearly

overestimated will be scored lower on the budget and may jeopardize receiving an award at all.

Q. Can we move funds from one category to another?

A. Yes. Funds are under district control as long as the funds are spent in the four allowable categories or used to subcontract with local providers, according to the requirements in the Notification of Funding Opportunity.

Q. How can benefits be included in budget line 101? The business administrator would have to break this out.

A. This form is for our use only to give the OECE a sense of how you propose to spend the money. It is up to the district to decide how to track these line items.

Q. Why there is no consideration for student transportation in ELLI?

A. While we realize that transportation is an important issue for many preschool programs, ELLI funds need to go to serving as many children as possible.

Q. Why doesn't ELLI pay for special education costs?

A. ELLI is intended to supplement other funding sources. Special education costs are already funded by special education funding sources. We cannot duplicate what is already funded by another source.

Q. Can ELLI funds be used for support staff?

A. No. ELLI is not intended to cover all costs. See page 7 of Operational Plan.

Q. Do we have to offer a spot to everyone?

A. No. You can project to serve a specific number of students and have them sign up on a first-come, first-served basis. Please keep in mind that all ELLI classes must have a blend of low-income, special education, and general education students. HOWEVER, if you are an Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) district, you are already required to provide a half-day program for all district four-year-old students who want to participate in a preschool program.

Q. Can we count on ELLI being there down the road?

A. It's in the budget now. The best way to ensure its continuance is to do the absolutely best program you can and serve as many children as possible.

Q. After our initial expansion with ELLI, do we have to keep expanding our program?

A. Not necessarily. If you choose to, you can continue to expand your program, but it is not required. Funding for expansion may not be available.

Q. What chance do new districts have for getting an award?

A. While districts currently implementing ELLI will be given priority for funding in 2005-2006, we anticipate still being able to fund a good number of new applicants (in part or in whole), depending on the size of the awards requested.

Q. Can you use this money to enhance a district program?

A. If you are not an ECPA district, you can plan to take existing classrooms and bring them up to ELLI standards of quality which may mean expanding the number of classrooms, but not necessarily the number of students. However, all ELLI classrooms must meet requirements in terms of the mix of students enrolled in each class.

Q. Must half-day ECPA programs be expanded to full-day or can districts add more half-day students?

A. ECPA districts are already required by statute to serve all students who apply and are age and resident eligible, so adding more half-day students is not an option for ECPA districts seeking ELLI funding. Instead, they must expand the existing program to full-day or take other measures to enhance program quality.

Q. If we contract with the county using local child care providers, does this count?

A. Yes.

Q. Does the Office of Early Childhood Education talk to special education staff about curriculum?

A. Yes. We collaborated on the Notice of Funding Opportunity and the Operational Plan document.

Q. Only kids with profound issues have been identified by age four so we end up with children that have not yet been classified and cannot function in this setting. How do we handle this?

A. Research and our experience show that only the very smallest number of four-year-olds can't benefit from a regular classroom setting. In addition, the district is legally responsible to identify and serve all children with any level of disability. It is common to identify mild and moderate disabilities.

Q. I have yet to see a packaged curriculum that meets all of the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

A. All of the curriculum model developers we invited to present at the Curriculum Showcase were selected because they do meet all aspects of the *Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality*.

Q. How much on average does professional development cost?

A. This varies tremendously. Contact the developers.

Q. Can you make a case for students who do not qualify for free and reduced lunch?

A. Yes. In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low-income children funded through

ELLI. This option is only to be used in rare cases where the district feels the family really needs the services (eg. multiple births).

Q. What if our union contract prevents us from offering the required two hours and 45 minutes to qualify for funding for a half-day program?

A. Two hours and 45 minutes is the absolute minimum needed for a half-day program. The district may propose alternative ways to maintain the program for that length of time, such as having dedicated special area teachers (music, art, world languages, phys. ed., etc.) take over the classroom for the extra minutes needed to come up to or above the required two hours and 45 minutes.

Q. What is the recommended balance of ELLI children, special education children and other children in an ELLI class?

A. Numbers may vary depending on the population of the district and the number of children in each classroom. It is a requirement of ELLI that each classroom have a blend of classified special education children (not more than a third of the class), non-income-eligible students who are not classified (also about a third or less), and income-eligible students.

Q. What if a child is classified midyear and, therefore, is no longer an ELLI child?

A. Once a child has been classified, he or she can no longer be counted toward the number of preschoolers in the ELLI funding calculation. However, keep in mind that recruitment can be ongoing and new children may enroll at any time during the year.

Q. This year's form asks about self-contained. Why?

A. We need to get a sense of the whole program being offered, what space you have, how you are using the space, and how you view your entire population of four-year-olds.